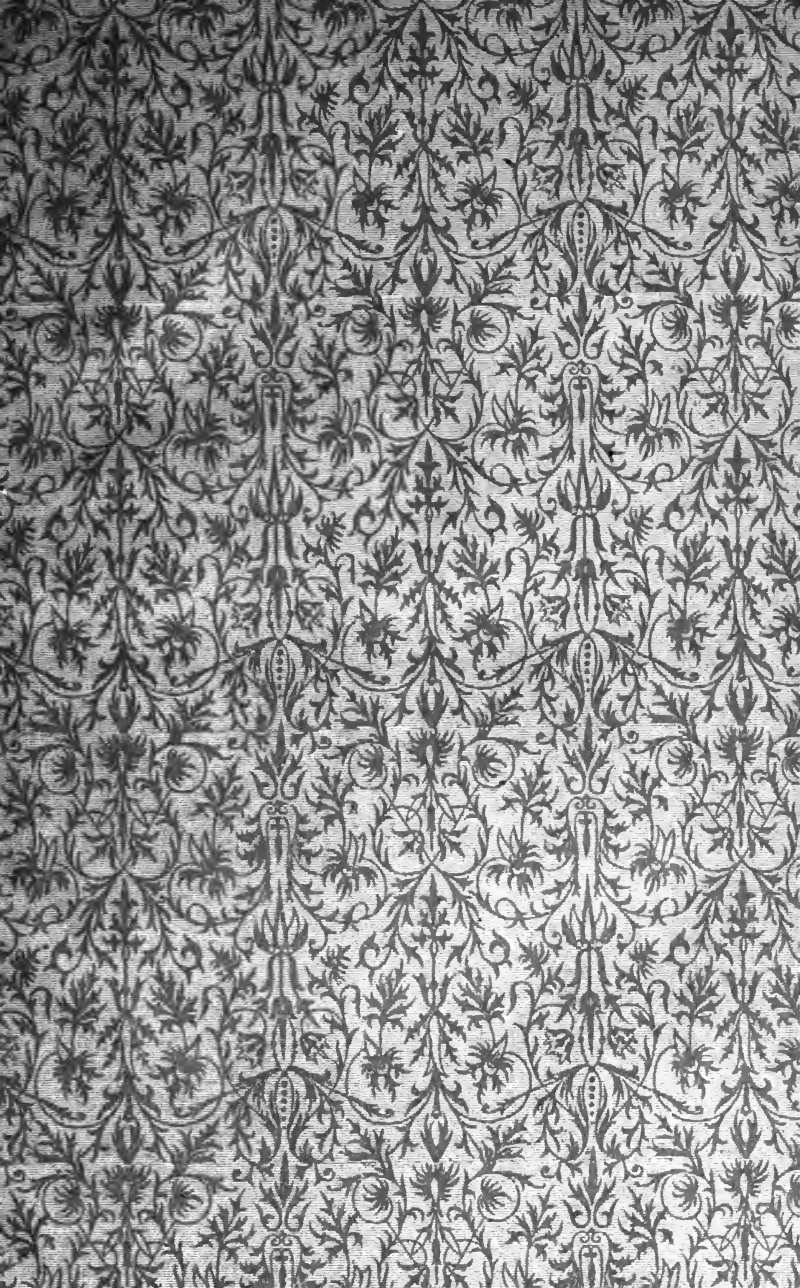


SANCTA SOPHIA
AND TROITZA.

FREDERICK WILLIAM HOLLS.





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With the author's compliments.

Recd Rus.
H.

SANCTA SOPHIA AND TROITZA:

A TOURIST'S NOTES ON THE ORIENTAL
CHURCH.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE MARTIN LUTHER SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK, MARCH 19, 1888.

BY
FREDERICK WILLIAM HOLLS
OF THE NEW YORK BAR.

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NOTE.

THE scope and occasion of the following essay are sufficiently indicated in its title. The necessary limits of space, and the desire to avoid all appearance of pedantry, precluded a full statement of, or reference to authorities. Suffice it to say that for historical and theological statements the works of Neale, Stanley, Schiemann, Macarius, and Winer, as well as Procopius, Silentiarius and Gibbon have been carefully consulted. The descriptions are, of course, based entirely upon personal observation, though comparison and reference have been made to the works of De Amicis, Warner, Kohl and other travelers.

The kind favor with which the essay has been received, encourages the hope that in its present form it may not be without interest to a wider circle of friends of the Society at whose request it is published.

F. W. H.

120 Broadway,

New York, June, 1888.

ERRATUM.

The number 18,314,000 in the table on page 6 should be omitted.

SANCTA SOPHIA AND TROITZA.

THE wise words of Goethe, that he who knows no other language, knows nothing of his own, have frequently and justly been applied to the knowledge of Religions. While Christianity must necessarily exclude the very idea of the existence of any other "Religion" with equal or even similar claims upon human faith, it is nevertheless true that the study and contemplation of the influence of other great systems of belief upon millions of human beings, whose minds are not materially different from our own, is one of the most fruitful and suggestive of investigations, abounding more-over in beneficial and strengthening effects

upon individual convictions. Of equal, and perhaps greater, importance is the comparative study of Christian denominations. We need not accept in its entirety the saying that the intensity of a man's Calvinism depends upon the amount of rainfall in the country, or upon the extent to which he suffers from dyspepsia, to admit that climate, habits and national history and characteristics have a more or less determining influence upon the point of view from which the great central truths of Christianity are regarded, as well as upon the doctrines and ceremonies in which this point of view is sought to be expressed. To know what others think upon subjects about which all must depend upon the same authority, will always remain one of the most liberalizing occupations for the mind, and the almost complete relegation of such studies to Theological Seminaries is the more to be regretted, since none would seem to be more thoroughly appropriate and beneficial to a conscientious and enlightened layman.

It is needless to say that this paper does not pretend to be a contribution to the science of Comparative Theology. Its object will be accomplished if it awakens, even in the slightest measure, an interest in the past and present of a great and most interesting body of Christian believers, of whose history and present condition even men of great culture in the Western world are comparatively ignorant. For such a purpose a tourist's random recollections are sometimes as useful as a volume, being what the French call "*Memoirs pour servir*;" and as such I offer my own, without an apology, but with the warning and the kind request to receive them in the spirit in which they are offered, and not to judge me by a standard which, under the circumstances, I cannot have the slightest aspiration to attain.

It was my good fortune, during the past year, to travel out of the beaten track in Europe, to Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania and Russia. Accordingly, I had an

opportunity of seeing and observing with more or less care, that great ecclesiastical body which seems to us of the West to be enveloped in a glamour of mysterious grandeur, but all accounts of which, though they had filled my boyish imagination, had nevertheless failed to convey a very clear impression,—the Oriental Church, variously called the “Eastern,” the “Greek Catholic,” or the “Orthodox Russian.” A detailed account of what may be seen and heard, even by a hurried tourist, would easily fill a volume, and it will be necessary for me to confine myself to a few salient points.

As the title indicates, my own impressions of the Oriental Church naturally group themselves around its two great sanctuaries,—the Church of the Heavenly Wisdom, Sancta Sophia, in Constantinople ; and the Troitza Monastery, near Moscow, the latter the capital at present and in the more immediate past, and the former, the centre of authority and inspiration in the remote past and the hoped-for future of the Oriental Church.

But before telling of my personal experiences, a few words on the history and present condition of this great organization may not be out of place.

By appropriating to itself all the events in the history of Christianity which occurred East of the Adriatic, the Oriental Church easily proves its claim to be the most ancient Christian body in the world. It points triumphantly to the fact that the Gospel was first preached in Jerusalem, and the reasoning of some Russian polemical writers will almost bear the construction that the Saviour appeared there because he foresaw that some day there would be an Orthodox Patriarch and Metropolitan of Jerusalem. The New Testament was written in the language of the Greek Catholic Church, and it is probable that the earliest services in Rome were held in that same Eastern tongue. Moreover there can be no doubt that the early Patriarchs of the Church, and the Ecumenical Councils were thoroughly Oriental in their leading characteristics. Whatever may be

said, however, as to the antiquity of the Oriental Church, it is certainly one of the largest bodies of Christian believers in the world, in fact the second in numbers. Professor Lindsay gives the following figures :

Orthodox Greek Church of Turkey, Rumania, Servia, Montenegro, Greece, Austria and Russia.....	78,314,000
Dissenters, Arminians, Nestorians, Thomas Christians in India, Syrian Jacobites.....	18,314,000
Copts and Abyssinians	5,822,000
United Greeks in Poland and Austria....	4,670,000
<hr/>	
Total :	88,806,000

An enumeration even of the chief events which led to the separation of this great body of Christians from their Western brethren is beyond the scope of this essay. The subject has been treated with great care and candor by Gibbon, and latterly by Neale and Stanley, and it may be said with some truth that a division was inevitable on account of the different bent of mind which characterized the leaders of thought in the East and in the West. The dogmatic work of the Oriental Church was the definition of that portion of

the creed of Christendom which concerns theology proper,—the doctrines of the nature of the Deity, and the doctrine of the Godhead in relation with humanity in the incarnation; while on the other hand it fell to the Latin Church to define anthropology, or the doctrine of man's nature and action. This is the essential distinction between the two systems of belief, and has been pointed out by almost every writer of note on the subject. The whole history of the *filioque* clause, the contest as to whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father alone, or from both the Father and the Son, abounds in illustrations of the subtle philosophical bent of the Greek mind, as well as, on the other hand, of the more practical notions of the Western theologian. Greek theology had its root in Greek philosophy, and its professors were the proper successors of the sophists; while Western theology was largely based on the Roman law, and Roman theologians argued with the precision of advocates. The divergence in-

creased rather than diminished, as centuries passed, though many attempts at reconciliation were made. In the intervals it is hard to say whether Gregory the First, or John the Faster, Leo the Ninth, or Michael Cerularius, cursed the other most lustily, or proved best, to his own satisfaction, that the offensive dogmas of his antagonists were outgrowths of the uttermost depths of hell. These theological disputations are even now not without interest, though it is difficult for us to believe that able men, such as many of the early Fathers of the Christian Church unquestionably were, could have failed to see the absurdity involved in their discussions of the precise relations between the Persons of the Godhead, infinite ages before the creation of the world, elaborated and commented upon with all the minuteness of modern lawyers raking up a millionaire's family history in order to break or uphold a will. Of course, the ridiculous pretensions of the Pope contributed largely to the break, and the fact that so large a body of Christians existed

who rejected Popery, raised the hope from time to time that hostility to the common enemy might bring about some understanding with the Protestant bodies of the Western world. Melancthon's efforts in this direction with the Patriarch Joasaph of Constantinople, and the later formal condemnation of Lutheran doctrine by the Patriarch Jeremiah, are well known. The efforts of the Anglicans and the old Catholics in this century proved equally futile, and the Oriental Church remains to-day what it was in the Middle Ages, a luridly brilliant mass of subtle and gross superstition, not without its grand and attractive features, at once the source and the back ground of Western Christianity. A volume might easily be filled with a dissertation on the leading characteristics and the really great features of the Oriental Church. To its identification with patriotic aspiration, its monasticism, its liturgy and its art, brief reference will be made hereafter, but even in a hasty sketch, mention may be made with honor of the en-

tire absence of a persecuting spirit in so powerful a body. Its history is not darkened by an Inquisition or a St. Bartholomew's massacre, and while even now it carefully protects itself against all danger of proselyting on the part of others, it in turn declines to interfere with the convictions of outsiders. Even in the Baltic provinces where we read of the discharge and persecution of Lutheran ministers, it is not so much Luther's faith as the German or Swedish language which is sought to be extirpated, and this very persecution is indeed but an indication of that national feeling which so distinguishes all branches of the Eastern Church. It no longer has a general, central authority,—the Patriarch of Constantinople has jurisdiction now only over the Church in the Ottoman dominions,—and in each country where it exists, the church is organized under an independent head.

Thus it is everywhere identified with a nation and all that is best in the aspirations

of the people, and the importance of such a relation can hardly be overestimated. To us American Protestants the Oriental Church is valuable only as a subject of study and observation, when we approach it sufficiently for that purpose, but even as such, its importance is not inconsiderable. As Dean Stanley truly says, "It cuts across the grain of our most cherished prejudices. Our well ordered phrases are thrown into confusion by encountering a vast communion which in some respects goes far ahead of us, in others falls so far behind us. From such an experience we may be taught that there is a region above and beyond our agitations. We may learn to be less positive in pushing theological premises to their extreme conclusions. It is useful to find that churches and sects do not exactly square according to our notions of what our logic and our rhetoric would lead us to expect."

Again, as a counterpoise to Popery, with far greater claims than the latter to veneration on the ground of antiquity, im-

mutability and historic grandeur, the Oriental Church fills a place of great significance for the spiritual inclinations of many believers. To quote the same author, "Remember that if the voice of authority is confident at Rome, it is hardly less confident at Constantinople and at Moscow. Remember that beyond the Carpathians, beyond the Haemus, beyond the Ural range, there are unbroken successions of Bishops, long calendars of holy men unknown in the West, who can return anathema for anathema as well as blessing for blessing. In the eyes of the Orthodox Russians and Greeks, the Pope is, to quote their own words, "the first Protestant; the founder of German rationalism". In the encyclical epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs in 1848, the Papal Supremacy is spoken of as "The chief heresy of the latter days, which flourishes now as its predecessor, Arianism flourished before it in the earlier ages and which like Arianism shall in like manner be cast down and vanish away."

We cannot think or speculate about a Universal Church without taking into account these opinions, and thus Oriental Christianity becomes a bulwark against the undue claims or encroachments of any church, whether of Rome, Geneva or even Augsburg.

Moreover, it is interesting and instructive to remember that the Oriental Church furnishes us with the one Creed which is accepted by all Christians—the Nicene—the Creed which is not only not Latin but untranslatable into Latin. The ancient Latin Creed commonly called “the Apostles” is only the foundation for others among both Catholics and Protestants in the West, but in the East the Nicene Creed is still the one bond of faith. Its solemn recitation is the culminating point of the service in the Church of Russia. The great bell of the Kremlin tower sounds during the whole time that its words are chanted. Every Czar at his coronation repeats its words aloud in the presence of the people ; and it may be read

worked in pearls on the robes of all the high dignitaries of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In our own liturgies it is a perpetual reminder of the distant Eastern church and the speculative turn of its theology.

In my trip I had occasion to visit many localities which are famous in the history of Christianity. From Rome I proceeded to Athens by way of Corinth. The historical reminiscences associated with Athens belong as far as Christianity is concerned, to all readers of the Bible, and neither here nor at Chios, Smyrna, Ephesus, Mitylene or Tenedos did I obtain any particular view of the Oriental Church, but on Monday morning, June 20th, it was my good fortune to behold for the first time, that most enchanting of European views, the city of Constantinople. Though perhaps most beautiful in the mellow light of the afternoon, when the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmora and the Golden Horn all seem like a lake of burnished gold, and the activity of life in the harbor and on the famous bridge lends a peculiar and

indescribable charm to the scene, still the impression made by Constantinople at sunrise on a perfect June morning, is deeper and more lasting. Chateaubriand, Gautier, Lamartine and specially De Amicis have described the scene in words of unrivalled beauty—to one who has not seen it, their enthusiasm seems altogether too gushing—but no description can do justice to such beauty, any more than to the bay of Naples, Niagara or the caverns of Luray. Before arriving at the city proper, we see on the right another place famous in Church history, Chalcedon, now called Kadi Kioi—the location of the fourth General Council of the Church, built by men whom the Oracle at Delphi rightly called blind, because they had neglected the magnificent site of Byzantium, nearly opposite, when laying out the city. There is, however, hardly time to think of this when the steamer rounds another headland and the Imperial City is before us—with the grand domè of Sancta Sophia in the immediate foreground.

Sancta Sophia—what innumerable associations does not the name awaken in every reader of history! For nine hundred years this was, without question, the chief sanctuary of Christendom, and to the Oriental Church its recapture and rededication are now, and have been since the conquest of Mahomet Second, the one perpetual subject of hope and prayer. It has become so generally known to us as the Mosque of Sophia—the conquest of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century seems so long ago, and our sense of historical perspective is so blunted by the barren waste of Mediaeval History—that it seems hard to realize that this Church was almost one thousand years old before the foundation stone of St. Peter's was laid, and that for many generations it occupied the same position in the veneration of all Christians which the great Roman Cathedral to-day holds in the eyes of all devout Papists. Even as a Mosque it is the most important religious structure within the territorial limits of the Oriental Church.

Volumes have been written about this edifice, and less than a volume would not be sufficient to describe even the chief events of its history, or the items of magnificence with which it was filled in the time of its glory. Gibbon has made us familiar with the story of its erection—when ten thousand workmen were employed under one hundred overseers,—the Priests incessantly chanting and praying during the progress of the work, while Justinian himself, clad in a simple linen tunic, was present most of the time superintending the whole. The same historian tells us that the payment of the workmen in fine new pieces of silver was never delayed beyond the evening, and this promptness seems to have had great accelerating influence, for the church was dedicated five years, eleven months and ten days after the first foundation. The whole civilized world was ransacked for materials for the grand edifice, the splendor of which may be inferred from the cost, which the Hon. S. S. Cox, in his recent work on Turkey, estimates in our

money at seventy million dollars. Justinian's pious vanity at the dedication was fully justified in exclaiming: "Glory to God, who has judged me worthy of accomplishing this work. Solomon! I have outdone thee!" Divine inspiration was unhesitatingly claimed for the plan. An angel had told Justinian to put three windows into the apse—to represent the the three persons of the Trinity, and the 107 columns of the church represent the 107 columns which sustained the house of Wisdom. The first writer who describes the church, Procopius, in his work on the edifices of Justinian, Book I, Chapter I, says:

"Who can recount the beauty of the piers and walls with which the church is glorified? The stranger would imagine that he stood in a meadow in its height of bloom; he would admire this sea-blue tint, that leaf-green hue; he would mark how the purple flowers, how the white glitters, nature having variegated the marbles with most opposite colors like a pattern. Whenever any one came hither to worship, he would at once perceive that this was not the work of mere human power, but of Divine inspiration, and he would walk about with his mind lifted up to heaven, feeling certain

that God Almighty was not far off but delighted greatly in this very seat which He had chosen for His glory. Nor were these the sensations only of one who visited the place for the first time, but every one would return with the idea that this was his first visit. None ever had a surfeit of seeing. Visitors were delighted with what they saw in the Temple and rejoiced to speak of it. It is impossible to estimate the amount of gold, silver and precious stones which Justinian gave to this edifice, but the reader may judge from one fact the Holiest Place of the Temple, inaccessible to any one except the Priests, and called the Altar, contains forty thousand pounds of silver."

The further writings of Procopius and Silentiarius tell us of hundreds of vessels of pure gold, of exquisitely wrought candelabra, of crosses of gold weighing one hundred pounds each, of lilies and trumpets of pure gold, of upwards of forty thousand chalice cloths embroidered with diamonds and pearls, while gold alone was considered too cheap a material for the great altar, which accordingly consisted of a mass of the most precious stones, imbedded in gold and silver. Justinian's intention had been to pave the

floor with gold plates, but, as we have seen from the account of Procopius he afterwards substituted variegated marbles laid in the most beautiful patterns.

If the memory of past grandeur strikes and overwhelms the traveler, the historical reminiscences gathered about this spot are not less impressive. Here stood the church of the same name erected by Constantine the Great, and which was afterwards burned, once by the party of St. John Chrysostom, and once in a tumult of the Blue and Green factions of the Hippodrome. It was the sepulchre of St. Andrew, St. Luke, and St. Timothy, whose bodies were transported hither from Ephesus after having reposed there for three centuries, and fifty years later it was honored by a still more illustrious presence, the ashes of the Prophet Samuel, brought by the Emperor Arcadius in a grand procession from their resting place in Judea to the banks of the Bosphorus. This was the site of the most famous homilies of St. John

Chrysostom and here occurred that most impressive scene, illustrating beyond any other the vanity of human glory—the protection, after his disgrace, of the eunuch Eutropius by St. John Chrysostom who had owed his elevation to the late sexless favorite. The object of his appeals lay grovelling, pale and affrighted, under a table of the altar, while Chrysostom pronounced one of his most seasonable and pathetic discourses on the forgiveness of sins and on the vanity of human greatness, to an innumerable crowd of either sex and of every age. We can imagine the effect of his burning eloquence, even from the report of the sermon which is still extant :

“Forsooth, such is the power of misfortune which renders a famous and happy man now the most abject of all ! Perhaps a rich man may be among you who comes here and sees all this splendor, but seeing this man, who has fallen from so high a station, nay, whose nod once shook the whole world, now crouched with fear like a frog or a hare, clinging to this column, though not bound by chains, dumb with fright and trembling,—such a one will curb

his arrogance, repress his pride, and considering everything which ought to be considered in human affairs, he will go away, taught by the very thing itself which the Scripture teaches us, namely, 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.' (Isa. 46)."

The appeal was successful and for the time being, Eutropius was safe. The splendor of this Church and the grandeur of its liturgy and musical service so impressed the Russian Prince Wladimir in 987, that he went home a converted Christian, and thus laid the foundation for the conversion of the Russian people, and for their enduring affection for the church and faith of Constantinople. Moreover, this edifice is the scene of the final dramatic act of separation between the East and West, for upon this altar, in 1054, Humbert, the Papal Legate, with characteristic effrontery, and having broken into the church like a burglar, placed a Papal breve, excommunicating the Patriarch and all his followers, thus making the breach with Rome irrevocable; "and," to use the words of Warner, "it was in this very nave

that Mahomet II. and Conqueror, spurred his horse through a crowd of fugitives, dismounted at the foot of the altar, cried, 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet,' and let loose his soldiery upon the people."

It was my good fortune to visit Sancta Sophia on an occasion which, of all others, is most calculated, to leave a lasting impression upon the mind. It was in the evening, the last night but one of the Ramazân, the Mussulman Lent, when special prayers are said in every mosque ; and thus an excellent opportunity was afforded me of not only seeing the ancient edifice rendered more impressive than ever by the light of innumerable lamps, but also of observing the most solemn Mohammedan public devotional service. At these times strangers are admitted only to the gallery, the ancient *γυναικώρις* or space reserved for women. An inclined pathway, perfectly feasible for a horse and rider, if not for a carriage, leads up to this, and a liberal backsheesh,—

in this case 30 piastres, or \$1.50,—renders the attending dervish very obsequious. Sancta Sophia has the peculiarity that from every point of view inside, the interior appears overwhelmingly grand and imposing. Unlike St. Peter's, it seems largest at first sight, though, like St. Peter's, the impression is deepened by repetition. But the most striking feature of the present Mosque, visible from the gallery, is the disturbing obliquity of the Mohammedan arrangements, when compared with the original plan of the building. In every mosque the *mihrab*, or prayer niche,—corresponding to the altar in a church,—must be in that part of the building which lies in the direction of Mecca, and mosques are always built with a view to this requirement; but the ancient Church of the Heavenly Wisdom had the altar, as usual, in the Eastern part of the building, so that the present *mihrab* is placed, not in the center of the apse, as would be required by symmetry, but on one side towards the Southeast. In consequence, all the carpets

are laid askew, and a very disagreeable and disturbing effect is produced. I found a small company of strangers from the various embassies, among them several Americans, in the gallery, but the scene which greeted our eyes has been so beautifully and so eloquently described by one of the most charming novelists of the day, Mr. F. Marion Crawford, in his "Paul Patoff", that I cannot do better than transcribe the passage, being, as I am, able to vouch for the accuracy of every detail :

"Far down in the vast church an Imam was intoning a passage of the Koran in a voice which hardly seemed human ; indeed, such a sound is probably not to be heard anywhere else in the world. The pitch was higher than what is attainable by the highest men's voices elsewhere, and yet the voice possessed the ringing, manly quality of the tenor, and its immense volume never dwindled to the proportion of a soprano. The priest recited and modulated in this extraordinary key, introducing all the ornaments peculiar to the ancient Arabic chant with a facility which an operatic singer might have envied."

(I may add that a sound such as this has been well imitated and musically utilized by Verdi in the last act of "Aïda.")

"Then there was a moment's silence, broken again almost immediately by a succession of heavy sounds which can only be described as resembling rhythmical thunder, rising and falling three times at equal intervals; another short but intense silence, and again the voice burst out with the wild clang of a trumpet, echoing and reverberating through the galleries and among the hundred marble pillars of the vast temple. * * * The whole congregation, amounting to thousands of men, are drawn up like regiments of soldiers in even ranks to face the *mihrab*, but not at right angles with the nave. The effect is startling and strangely inharmonious, like the studied distortions of some Japanese patterns, but yet fascinating from its very contrariety to what the eye expects.

"There they stand, the ranks of the faithful, as they have stood yearly for centuries in the last week of Ramazan. As the trumpet notes of each recited verse die away among the arches, every man raises his hands above his head, then falls upon his knees, prostrates himself, and rises again, renewing the act of homage three times, with the precision of a military evolution. At each prostration, performed exactly and simultaneously by that countless multitude, the air is filled with the

tremenduous roar of muffled rhythmical thunder, in which no voice is heard, but only the motion of ten thousand human bodies, swaying, bending, and kneeling in unison. Nor is the sound alone impressive. From the vaulted roof, from the galleries, from the dome itself, are hung hundreds of gigantic chandeliers, each having concentric rings of lighted lamps, suspended a few feet above the heads of the worshippers. Seen from the great height of the gallery, these thousands of lights do not dazzle nor hide the multitude below, which seems too great to be hidden, as the heavens are not hid by the stars ; but the soft illumination fills every corner and angle of the immense building, and, lest any detail of the architecture and splendid music should escape the light, rows of little lamps are kindled along the cornices of the galleries and roof, filling up the interstices of darkness as a carver burnishes the inner petals of the roses on a huge gilt frame of exquisite design, in which not the smallest beauty of the workmanship can be allowed to pass unnoticed.

“This whole flood of glorious illumination descends then to the floor of the nave, and envelops the ranks of white and green clothed men, who rise and fall in long sloping lines, like a field of corn under the slanting breeze. * * * A man looks down upon the serried army of believers, closely packed, but not crowded nor irregular, shoulder to shoul-

der, knee to knee, not one of them standing a hair's breadth in front of his rank nor behind it, moving all as one body, animated by one principle of harmonious motion, elevated by one unquestioning faith in something divine,—a man looks down upon this scene, and, whatever be his own belief, he cannot but feel an unwonted thrill of admiration, a tremor of awe, a quiver of dread, at the grand solemnity of this unanimous worship of the unseen."

The service was very short, lasting not more than about twenty-five minutes, and at its close we were permitted to inspect the rest of the gallery. We visited the place where the Empress Theodora was wont to sit, her name being carved into the balustrade, but the light above was so defective that I decided to postpone a further view until the next morning.

We were up betimes, and wisely decided to visit Sancta Sophia first before dulling our perception with the sight of any of the other curiosities and historical monuments with which the city abounds.

The exterior of the famous edifice presents little worthy of note. Even the cupola looks

small, and only the minarets attract the eye. Numerous small and mean looking buildings, schools, baths, hospitals and mausoleums hide the architecture of the church. The dome has lost its silvery splendor which once, according to the ancient writers, made it visible from the summit of Olympus, and Mark Twain is not so very far wrong in comparing the whole outward impression made to that produced by a whitewashed barn. Appeasing the scowling dervish at the door with another liberal backsheesh we enter the *narthex*, or outer court of the church. From this five doors lead into the *esonarthex* or vestibule, from which nine doors lead into the nave of the church proper. On the wall of the *esonarthex* a celebrated gilt Mosaic, representing Christ judging the world, with an admirable portrait in Mosaic of Justinian kneeling at the right hand of the Divine throne at once strikes the eye of the beholder. Entering the church from the grand centre door of bronze, the impression made by the mighty and famous dome proves to be even more

overwhelming than we had supposed the evening before. We put on the enormous felt slippers without which no infidel is permitted to touch the sacred carpets of the Mosque, and walked to the middle of the nave. Looking up at the grand dome it seems indeed as Madame De Stael said of the dome of St. Peter's, like an abyss suspended over one's head. To quote that most charming of travelers and best of writers about Constantinople, De Amicis: "It is immensely high with an enormous circumference and its depth is only one-sixth of its diameter which makes it appear still larger. At its base a gallery encircles it, and above the gallery there is a row of forty arched windows. In the top is written the sentence pronounced by Mahomet II., as he sat on his horse in front of the high altar on the day of the taking of Constantinople: 'Allah is the Light of Heaven and of Earth.' And some of the letters which are white upon a black ground are nine yards long." As every one knows, this aerial prodigy could not be constructed

with the usual materials, and it was built of pumice stone that floats on water, and with bricks from the island of Rhodes, five of which scarcely weigh as much as one ordinary brick. In each brick was written the sentence of David, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her and that right early." At every twelfth row of bricks holy relics were built in. Can we now be astonished when we think that the construction of this second firmament, so marvelous even in our day, was in the sixth century a thing without example? The vulgar believed that it was upheld by enchantment and the Turks for a long time after the conquest when they were praying in the Mosque, had much to do to keep their faces toward the East and not turn them upwards to the 'Stone Sky.'

A prominent Austrian architect whom I met during my stay in Constantinople, and who had just visited Sancta Sophia, assured me that it would be impossible with the methods and appliances known to-day, to

duplicate this dome, which is one hundred and eighty-three feet high and one hundred and six feet in diameter. Whichever way one turns in the church, a segment of it can be seen and the eye and mind rise and float within its circle with a pleasurable sensation, almost like that of flying. The church is constructed upon an almost equilateral rectangle, from the centre of which rises the dome upheld by four great arches supported upon four very lofty pilasters. Around this seven half domes are clustered, without any apparent support, so that they seem, as Silentiarius writes, to be suspended by seven invisible threads from the vault of heaven. Between the four enormous pilasters, which form a square in the middle of the church, rise to the right and left eight columns of green breccia. These were presented to Justinian by the magistrate of Ephesus, and belonged to the temple of Diana that was burned by Erostratus. They sustain at great height the two vast galleries which present two more ranges of columns and sculptured

arches. Between the pilasters eight porphyry columns stand two and two, which belonged to the Temple of the Sun, built by Aurelian, at Baalbec. They are of enormous height and with a diameter of from two to three feet, and sculptured with the delicacy of Brussels lace. The columns supporting the galleries are from the Temple of Jove at Cizicum, from Palmyra, from Thebes, Athens, Rome and Alexandria, and they present an infinite variety of sizes and colors. Their friezes, cornices, rosettes, balustrades, and capitals are of all orders, and most fantastic in design, coupled together by chance, and altogether, as De Amicis rightly says, present a strange aspect of magnificence and barbarous disorder, and are the scorn of good taste, although one cannot take one's eyes from them. The galleries are of enormous size, and could each contain the population of a suburb of Constantinople. Approaching the balustrade in the day time and looking over, the gigantic dimensions of everything become more impressive than ever. "The

green discs with inscriptions from the Koran, which look no larger than a chariot wheel, would cover a house. The windows are the portals of palaces. The wings of the mosaic cherubim are sails of ships. The tribunals are public squares. The dome makes your head swim." Casting down your eyes you find another wonder. You did not know you had gone up so high. The floor of the nave is at the bottom of an abyss. The pulpits, the enormous alabaster urns from Pergamon, the mats, the lamps, have all grown singularly little. The ordinary day time life of the mosque can be embraced at once with the eye, from above. We see Turks on their knees with their foreheads touching the pavement. Others are standing erect with their hands before their faces as if they were studying palmistry; veiled women on their knees; old men kneeling before the lecterns reading the Koran; an Imam hearing a group of boys reciting; the vague harmony formed by the low monotonous voices of those reading or praying; those thousand strange lamps with

clear and equal light; that deserted apse; those vast silent galleries; that immensity; those memories, that peace leaving in the soul an impression of mystery and grandeur which words cannot express nor time efface. Strenuous efforts were made by the Turks to destroy all characteristics of the Christian church. The mosaics were mostly all white-washed over. One of the four carpets which Mohammed used in prayer is hung up on one of the pilasters of the apse. Triumphant standards of Mahomet II. and other Sultans cover up much Christian art. To the right of the *mihrab* is the tribune of the Sultan closed with gilded lattice work. To the left is the pulpit where the Imam reads the Koran with a drawn scimeter in hand, to indicate that the Mosque was acquired by conquest. But the visitor to-day cannot but be struck with a curious fact which is rarely alluded to, namely, the reappearance of several of the old mosaic crosses from under the whitewash which has gradually peeled off and disappeared. I counted seven beautiful crosses

which could be distinctly seen through the slight film of whitewash which yet adhered to them; and according to their fatalism, the Turks will not cover them up again, believing that their reappearance has been ordained by Allah, and many of them considering this an evil omen for the continuance of Turkish rule in Constantinople. It is needless to add that no Christian can visit this church without the sincere hope that these fatal premonitions may speedily prove true.

After spending an hour or more in aimless wandering about, drinking in the beauty of the scene, we allowed the dragoman to show us the special sights. There is first the pilaster upon which Mahomet the Conqueror when he entered, left the bloody impress of his right hand. Then there is the so-called "cold window," from which a fresh gust of air is always blowing. Near another window is the famous slab of resplendent marble which always glows like a piece of crystal when struck by the rays of the sun. On the left of the entrance, on the north side, is the

“sweating column,” covered with bronze, through an aperture in which can be seen and felt the marble always moist. I tried it on several occasions and can verify the statement. Finally, we saw the concave block of marble brought from Bethlehem, in which it was said the Saviour was laid as soon as He was born. In the gallery we saw the famous walled-up door, through which the Greek Bishop disappeared at the sight of the invaders at the conquest. The pursuing soldiers found themselves stopped by a stone wall in the place where the door had been. All the masons in Constantinople tried but failed to open a breach in the miraculous wall; (I know that this is so, for I have seen the wall myself.) But, according to our dragoman, Leonidas, himself ostensibly a devout Greek Catholic, that wall will open on the day when the profaned church shall be restored to the worship of Christ. “And then the Bishop will issue forth in his pontifical habit with the chalice in his hand, with a radiant countenance, and mounting the steps of the high

altar he will resume mass at the exact point where he left off, and on that day the dawn of new centuries shall shine resplendent for Constantinople."

Upon the whole it is a sad impression which Sancta Sophia makes upon the visitor. There is more admiration for what has been than for what is. But repeated visits turn this feeling into one of hope for what may and for what we fondly pray will be. Having seen this church, the aspirations and hopes of the orthodox Russians and Greeks appear perfectly natural. Here is, indeed, a sanctuary of which when restored all Christianity might well be proud. The recovery of this Basilica, the very centre of Oriental Christianity, is indeed a worthy ambition for the great Oriental church, and we can well understand that this ambition is coldly looked upon by the Roman See, for once attained, it will give to the Oriental church that outward prominence over the Roman Catholic to which it is clearly entitled by its history and tradition.

At present the headquarters of the Oriental church in Constantinople are near the head of the Golden Horn, near the famous light-house or Phanar, from which the Greek Catholics of to-day in Constantinople take their name of Fanariotes. The Metropolitan or Patriarchal church is the so-called Church of the Twelve Apostles, which at the time of my visit was closed for repairs. A series of institutions of learning, the newest and most beautiful of which was a young ladies' seminary, have grown up in this neighborhood and under the supervision of the present learned and venerable Patriarch, Dionysius. But to one whose stay was necessarily so limited as my own, it was impossible to see more of the Christian life of the capital of Moslemism. On a beautiful Saturday afternoon I sailed up the Bosphorus to the Black Sea, and after a beautiful but uneventful journey through Bulgaria, Rumania and Southern Russia, I found myself in the holy city of Moscow. I had seen the locality round which are gathered the Orthodox Rus-

sian's sweetest memories of the past and dearest hopes for the future, and I was accordingly well prepared to see the capital of the Oriental church of the present time.

The limits of this essay of course preclude even the most hurried account of Holy Moscow, as it is affectionately called by every Russian. Its beauty, quaintness, and fascinating features are second only to those of Constantinople, and have been the theme of many writers. In some respects it seems quite as Oriental as the Imperial city on the Bosphorous. The view from the Sparrow Hills, where Napoleon first saw the extreme objective point of his ambition, and which still is the most beautiful and advantageous point of view in or about the city, reminds one of the descriptions of Bagdad or Isphahan in the Arabian Nights, while from the height of the Ivan Veliky tower of the Kremlin, the city with its white walls, its green and red roofs, and its brilliant blue and gold domes looks not unlike a huge flower-bed in

full bloom. It seems indeed a fitting capital city of the gorgeous Oriental Christianity, and it is with some surprise that most tourists hear that the chief sanctuary of the Orthodox faith is not to be sought here, but out in the wilderness of the North-East, at a point to which I must now call my hearers' attention.

If the possession and rededication of St. Sophia in Constantinople represents the highest aim and most intense longing of the devout Russian of to-day,—if such a consummation would undoubtedly make that venerable edifice the centre of all Orthodox devotion, it is no less true that for the present the real capital of the Oriental Church, its most venerated spot and dearest sanctuary is the great Troitza Monastery, “Ssergienskaja Troitzkaja Lawra” located about forty-four miles to the northeast of Moscow. It is at once the Vatican and the Oxford of Russian religious life, and before describing my own visit to its sacred precincts, I may be permitted to touch

briefly upon its history and general importance.

The early and mediaeval history of Russia is not an inviting or fruitful field of inquiry, and the fact that most, if not all, modern historians of the period unfortunately have deemed it necessary to write with more regard to scholarly fulness than to readableness, is no doubt the cause of much of the prevailing ignorance on the subject even among educated men in Western Europe and America.

In our enjoyment of the many tales of romance and chivalry in the contest between the Christians and the Moors in Spain, we are apt to forget the equally heroic struggle lasting for more than two centuries, between Cross and Crescent on the plains of Russia. Perhaps the most serious cause of the estrangement between the Oriental and the Western Catholic churches,—the ground of the deepest grudge owed by the latter to the former, was the apathy and indifference displayed by the Russian Christians towards the

Crusades. But as Dean Stanley very justly says, (*The Eastern Church*, p. 444)—“The constant struggle against the Mussulman Tartars of the North was a crusade * * * far more close and severe, more disastrous in its duration, and proportionately more glorious in its close, than the remote struggle of Europe with the Mussulman Turks and Arabs of the South.”

The very name for a Russian Peasant, *Christianin*,—Christian, is a relic of the time when Christian was a distinctive name for a Russian. On the top of every Russian church in every town which was under the Tartar yoke, the Cross is planted on a Crescent. To this is to be ascribed the strong anti-Mussulman feeling which animates the heart of every Russian peasant, and which, whether by nature or policy is so powerful an engine in all the wars which have in later times been waged against Turkey. During the hand to hand and life and death struggle with the Tartar oppressors, the clergy more than any princes or purely

military leaders, were the chief deliverers of their people, and then it was that the foundations were laid for that close and intimate union between the religious and political life of the nation, which survives to this day. The importance of monasteries in such a time can hardly be overestimated. Though generally taking their origin from some pious hermit, whose sanctity attracted worshippers and disciples, they soon became nothing less than fortresses and bulwarks—refuges for patriotism as well as for religion, and this characteristic they have retained, in outward appearance, to the present day. Nothing so strikes the beholder in the view from the Ivan Veliky tower in the Kremlin, as the row of monasteries, each surrounded like a fortress with walls, turrets, parapets and trenches, and which almost encircle the city. Many more are to be found scattered over the empire, but the most formidable and military looking, as well as the most ancient and venerable of all is the Troitza.

It owes its existence to man whose name

is almost unknown to Western readers, but who, to a Russian symbolizes all that clusters around the memory of Tell, Joan of Arc, William the Silent or Andreas Hofer in the minds of their respective countrymen, to wit, the holy hermit St. Sergius. He was born 1315, and founded this sanctuary when only twenty-three years of age—in 1338, by building with his own hands a small wooden church dedicated to the Holy Trinity (Troitzza) and to which the reputation of his piety and eloquence soon drew numerous monks and worshippers. The Black Death, which Hallam well describes as “a pestilence the most extensive and unsparing of which we have any memorial”, reached Russia in 1351, and under the religious awakening which followed its ravages, many convents were established, and of these Troitzza was at once recognized as the chief. Many others entered into a state of quasi feudal dependence upon the monastery of Sergius, who had meanwhile risen to the supreme dignity of Metropolitan of Moscow, where the great

Donskoi monastery at the foot of the sparrow hills commemorates the miraculous effect of his prayer and remonstrance upon the Russians under Demetrius in the victory over the Tartars on the Don in 1380. Notwithstanding all the honors heaped upon him, by the Muscovite princes and the patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius remained as simple selfdenying and laborious as before, hewing wood and drawing water to the last. He was rewarded, according to the well authenticated annals of the Church, by a visit from the Virgin Mary, accompanied by St. Peter and St. John, in 1388. This miracle of course ensured his canonization immediately after his death, which occurred in 1393. Soon after a horde of Tartars took Moscow and burned the Troitza Monastery. After their retreat the body of Sergius, which had been buried in the church just destroyed by the Tartars, was found wholly uninjured and in a state of perfect preservation by his successor Nikon. The news of this second miracle soon spread and naturally tended to augment the fame

of the Sanctuary. A new church was built upon the site of the original building of Sergius in 1422, and this edifice is still standing, and contains the holy of holies of Troitza—the body of the Saint himself. Pilgrimages to this sanctuary now became a regular feature of Russian religious life, and the wealth and influence of the organization increased enormously. About 1550, the present wall which is 20 feet thick, and from 25 to 50 feet in height, and is defended by nine towers, was erected, and soon after, Ivan the Terrible, in atonement of some of his infamies, built the two chief cathedrals, of which one, the Usspensky, still retains its pre-eminence. The same Czar also erected an Imperial palace and several immense dormitories for monks and pilgrims, and bestowed special honors and dignities upon the office Hegoumenos or Prior of the Monastery. At that time the organization Troitza comprised nine monasteries, two nunneries and many villages with upwards of one hundred and twenty thousand serfs, and its armed

force consisted of twenty thousand men.

The second great crisis of Russian history followed, the invasion of Russia by the Poles, and the threatened supplanting of the Orthodox faith by that of Popery.

Within twenty years of the time when, by the failure of the Armada, definite limits appeared to have been set to the bloody ambitions of the Papal Church in the West, a vista of even greater conquest presented itself in the East. To a generation which has witnessed the Russian atrocities of 1863, in Warsaw, and to which the partition of Poland appears as the height of despotic and diplomatic wickedness, it sounds strange to hear of Russian sufferings under Polish oppression, and, in fact, of a Polish partition of Russia. Yet this was the fact, and Stanley is right in insisting that "neither the Civil nor the Ecclesiastical history of Russia can be understood without bearing in mind that long family quarrel between the two great Slavonic nations, to us so obscure, to them so ingrained, so inveterate, so intelligible."

Its lasting effect was as strong and hardly less important than that produced by the wars with Ghengis Khan and the Tartars. As the latter represented Mohammedanism so the Poles brought with them Latin Christianity with all its characteristic features, notably its offensive and tyrannical intolerance of all other forms of worship. Moscow surrendered to the invader, Latin services were chanted in the Kremlin, crucifixes and statues, as well as the sound of an organ desecrated the Patriarchal Cathedral. To the Orthodox Russian a deliverance from the yoke of this abomination was as vitally important as the defeat of the Tartars, and his hatred of the oppressor was as fervid and deep-seated in the one case as in the other. Nothing has so greatly contributed to produce the complete isolation of the Orthodox Church, and to continue its hostility towards all forms of Western Christianity, as this identification in the popular mind, of Roman Catholicism with the horrors of Polish oppression.

"Once again," says Stanley "it was the Church that saved the Empire, and the monastery of Sergius that saved them both." One of the most heroic episodes in Russian history is the defense of the Troitza Monastery against the Polish Army under Sapieha and Lissowski, 1608—9. For sixteen months the place was besieged by thirty thousand men, and its fortifications, moats and towers were put to the severest tests of actual warfare. In the numerous pictures of the siege which are still sold to peasants, a goodly number of saints and ghosts are represented as fighting along with the monks and creating havoc among the invaders, and it will be remembered that similar apparitions were seen by the devout Spaniards in their contests with the Moors. This was long before the beginning of Temperance agitation.

The defence of Troitza was the salvation of the Empire. From the church of St. Sergius, Pojarsky and Minin went forth to save their country. A beautiful statue in Moscow commemorates their heroism, and

the picture of the Redeemer which Pojarsky received from the hands of Dionysius the prior of Troitza, and which was carried before his army in a long series of victories, was placed in the principal gate of the Kremlin, which has since retained the name of the Holy or Redeemer's gate. No Russian, not even the Czar would presume, and no stranger is allowed, to pass through this gate without uncovering his head.

Once more the Monastery of St. Sergius was to be the scene of a crisis in the history of Russia. In 1685, the Usspensky Cathedral became the refuge of young Peter,—afterwards justly called the Great and his mother Natalie from the fury of the Strelitzes. Says Stanley "She was permitted to conceal herself not only within the precincts of the convent, not only within the walls of the principal church, but behind the sacred screen beside the altar itself, where, by the rules of the Eastern Church no woman's foot is allowed to enter. That altar still remaining on the same spot stood between

the past and the future destinies of Russia. On one side crouched the mother and her son, on the other the fierce soldiers were waving their swords over the head of the Imperial child. 'Comrade, not before the altar' exclaimed the more pious or more merciful of the two assassins. At that moment a troop of faithful cavalry galloped into the court yard, and Peter was saved."

An ivory ball, turned by Peter in his retirement at Troitza still hangs in the great refectory, and on one of the gates a duck carved in stone commemorates the momentous fact that he practiced duck-shooting on a neighboring pond.

The wealth of the Monastery grew to such proportions that Catherine II. confiscated all its lands except the original enclosure, but otherwise the fame and power of this great institution has steadily increased. It is today the spot of all others which must be visited by a traveler who is desirous of seeing the "true inwardness," as it were, of the Russian people. No Czar comes to Moscow

without paying his devotions there. Many of the nobles of the present day have made their first pilgrimage thither on foot, in which manner the wicked and great Catherine herself came by easy stages, five miles a day, with vessels of water of the Neva always at hand to refresh her. The greatest obstacle to-day to the modern tourist in his efforts to see this most interesting of Russian sights, is the great crowd of pilgrims from all parts of the Empire, whose wants and devotions are apt to monopolize the attention of all inmates competent to act as guides.

It was a beautiful Summer Sunday morning, in July, when I took the train at Moscow bound for this famous monastery. I was fortunate enough to have as a companion a French gentleman of great experience as a traveler, the Marquis de Bernieres, who with his family had just arrived overland from Peking and with whom I had become acquainted in Moscow. His standing and knowledge of Russian proved to be of inestimable value, and it may be remarked that

nowhere in Russia is a guide or the company of some one understanding the language so valuable as at Troitza. After a ride of about two hours through dreary scenery, we saw at our left the enormous pile of the venerable Monastery. It being Sunday, there were more pilgrims and worshippers than usual, and not only the train but all the country roads which we saw near the monastery, were covered with pilgrims bound for the churches. According to the estimate of one of the priests, there were not less than sixteen thousand pilgrims there that day, representing every locality and every people of the Russian Empire. The station is about half a mile from the monastery, and the road is lined with vendors of relics, and especially of pictures representing scenes from the life of St. Sergius and from the history of his sanctuary. The latter is defended by nine enormous turrets, some of which still show marks of the siege by the Poles in 1608. The enclosure contains, upon a superficial estimate, about sixty acres of land, upon

which there are twelve churches and chapels, the large Imperial palace built by Ivan the Terrible, a theological seminary, the residence of the Archimandrite, and numerous buildings of enormous size appertaining to the monastery proper, the refectory, dining halls, dormitories, two nunneries, and a great warehouse. The yard is quite densely planted with trees whose shade was most agreeable on the warm Summer day, and beneath which the hosts of pilgrims were scattered. As it was early, we took up a position near the great bell tower, a very large structure 290 feet in height, in the most hideous style of architecture, that of the French Renaissance of the last century. Here we watched the pilgrims as they arrived. They first went to the main building of the Monastery and following them thither we saw that what seemed to be the first duty was to purchase some of the holy bread baked by the monks, and upon which a verse from the Bible is written by novices who were on hand for the purpose. Whoever bought a

loaf took it into the adjoining room, where behind a long table some twenty or twenty-five pale, beardless novices with long black hair hanging over their shoulders and a long black gown girded round the loins with a rope of the same color, sat, each with a quill and inkstand, and without saying a word, but with a sad woe-begone look, would take the loaf of bread from each pilgrim as he arrived and write a few words of Russian upon it and hand it back. This holy bread is taken home and considered a most precious relic, but unfortunately it is not miraculously provided with an elixir of life or of sweetness, at least the loaf which I bought and which was inscribed with the same sanctity as the rest, turned sour before I had reached the boundaries of the empire, and had to be thrown into the Baltic. After watching this curious scene which was enlivened by many struggles for precedence between the pilgrims, we entered the oldest and holiest of the churches, which, as said above was built in 1422, on the site of the original chapel of

St. Sergius. and which has of all others the title "*Troitzky Chram*" or Church of the Holy Trinity. It is a small and low edifice in the Byzantine style of architecture. The interior is decorated with barbarous splendor, gold, silver and precious stones meeting the eye in every direction. Some of the original frescoes and pictures of saints are notable and to my mind were quite as artistic as anything of the pre-Raphaelite school which I had seen in Italy. In front of the altar is the holy of holies of the place, the sarcophagus of St. Sergius, made of solid silver, studded with jewels, and weighing 936 pounds. Above it is a portrait of the saint painted on wood from his coffin, a miraculous picture, which Peter the Great carried with him in all his campaigns, and which is even now held in the highest veneration by every Orthodox Russian. Its presence here alone, in the opinion of the Russian people, saved the Troitza Monastery from capture by the French in 1812, and even if it were known to the common people,

instead of being kept a secret, that the same picture was sent to Sebastopol, in 1855, where unfortunately its miraculous powers seem to have deteriorated with age and were not quite sufficient to keep out the allied armies, it is very doubtful whether this blow to its prestige would make much difference in the eyes of a pious Russian. The readiness of even the most devout Russians, priests as well as laymen, to show strangers their most venerated objects of worship was strikingly illustrated here. Upon our entry, my companion expressed the wish to see what there was left of the body of St. Sergius, and after a brief consultation, the priests very readily opened the sarcophagus. The corpse was covered with a precious red velvet cover and only at the head was there a small aperture through which we could see the original skull or what looked like the original skull of some one. It may have been St. Sergius or his substitute. A golden cross, donated by the Empress Catherine II, was affixed to the cover over his breast, and this the priests

kissed with extreme devotion, inviting us to the same, but showing no chagrin whatever when we politely declined. In the stall of the Archbishop is a representation of the Lord's Supper, of which the figures are of solid gold, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, who is of brass. There was no service in this church on that day, and after glancing at a small chapel near by—built on the supposed site of the cell where the Virgin appeared to St. Sergius, we went to the largest and greatest of the cathedrals, the so-called Usspensky Cathedral or Church of the Ascension of the Virgin Mary. This also is in the Byzantine style of architecture with five mighty domes decorated in the most beautiful manner with bright gold stars on a brilliant dark blue back-ground ; from afar one of the most beautiful specimens of architecture which I have seen.

At the entrance to the Cathedral the sarcophagus and monument of the Czar Boris Godunow and his family attracts great attention, and over the holy door of the altar screen

a double headed eagle in wood commemorates the concealment and escape of Peter the Great, to which reference has been made above. The cathedral was crowded, but on making ourselves known to one of the attendant officers, two priests were called and assigned to us as guides. The service had just begun and it was very strange, to say the least, to notice that notwithstanding this, in all parts of the cathedral an exceedingly active market of candles and of holy bread was going on, not interrupted in the slightest degree by the entrance of the Archimandrite, and his assistant from the doors of the holy screen behind the altar. It was the first full service of the holy Orthodox Church which I was privileged to attend, but space forbids a detailed description either of the liturgy or of the general arrangement of a Greek church. The splendor of the priestly vestments was far beyond my expectation, though as I afterwards ascertained, not nearly the most precious ones were in use on that day. No greater mistake can be made

than to think of these Russian monks and priests as resembling in the slightest degree the Roman Catholics bearing the same titles in this country. The fact that the Russian priests and monks invariably wear magnificent beards is not the greatest point of difference. As a matter of fact, I do not think that I have ever seen more splendid specimens of manhood than these very monks who were engaged in that service, either as officiating clergy or as choral singers. The music of the Russian church has often been described and is familiar to every visitor even of the beautiful Russian chapel in Paris. Rejecting absolutely the use of all instruments, the Russians are compelled to lay greater stress upon the cultivation of the voice, and especially the bass which being at the foundation of the other voices, and without the help of an organ or bass-viol must necessarily be full and clear in order to produce the proper effect. The bass singers which I heard at the Troitza, could, every one of them, earn fortunes in

one season on the stage, for no such voices it may be safely said, have ever been heard in opera either in Europe or in America. During the Litany the words "Gospodi pomilui" "Lord have mercy upon us," are chanted twenty-eight times and every time the grandeur of the harmony seemed more overpowering and fascinating, while the Gloria of Bortniansky, which happened to be sung on the same day, notwithstanding that it is quite familiar, seemed a revelation in church music. Of course none of the congregation were provided with seats, and what with the jostling of zealous pilgrims endeavoring to get near enough to light their candles at the candles of the altar, and to have them blessed by one of the officiating priests, it was difficult to keep one's place. Of order, such as we are accustomed to in our churches, the Russian seems to have no conception whatever, and in the very midst of the mass, while the officiating priest was kneeling and reading aloud the Gospel of the day, our guides took us up to the altar,

showing us the precious crucifix, and repeatedly leading us between the priest and the congregation, showing considerable astonishment at our hesitation to follow. The same had happened to me at Moscow during vesper services but it was difficult to believe that no greater reverence would be shown during the chief service of a Sunday.

When the Nicene Creed was chanted, the great bell in the tower, which is said to weigh one hundred and forty thousand pounds was incessantly sounded, and it was interesting to watch how the exact genuflections, nods and marks of the cross, prescribed by the liturgy were observed with the most painful care by all the officiating clergy. To a Western mind these seem trifles, but we must not forget the fact that there is in Russia an earnest body of over five million Dissenters, who consider themselves so superior in piety and in Orthodoxy to the established church that they will have no religious intercourse with its members, except only on the morning of Easter, and then

not in a church, but in the public square of the Kremlin, and whose three chief grievances against the established church, are, 1st, that in the latter the priest gives the blessing with two fingers instead of three; second, that at the end of the "Gloria" the established Church chants the word "Hallelujah" three times instead of once; and thirdly, that in the received version of the Nicene Creed the word "holy" is inserted saying "The holy giver of life" instead of "Giver of life." It is difficult to conceive of a more extreme case of subordination of the spirit to the letter, and its moral is neither far to seek nor wholly without application to some of the tendencies of the more fanatical factions of the Lutheran Church even in the United States of America.

From the church we went to the most interesting spot of the Monastery, its great treasury, and, however deeply the traveler may have been impressed with the wealth of the churches of St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kief, it is only here that anything like

an adequate idea of the riches of this great organization can be obtained. European history proves that a national church may be enormously wealthy while the country itself is on the verge of bankruptcy. Nowhere is this fact so clearly brought out as in Russia. The present government is obliged to pay a usurious interest and to offer every possible advantage to the bankers of Berlin or Paris in order to raise one hundred million dollars. The treasury of Troitza alone according to the best authorities is valued at six hundred million rubles or upwards of three hundred million dollars of our money. When there is added to this the riches in the Usspensky Cathedral at Moscow, and in the Church of the Holy Saviour at the same place, built by the Russian people as a thank-offering for their deliverance from Napoleon in 1812, at a cost of forty-six million rubles, the innumerable jewels in St. Isaac's Cathedral at St. Petersburg, and the untold wealth in gold and silver vessels scattered broad cast throughout the whole empire, we

see the true piety of a people and a government which prefers to humiliate itself in the money markets of the Western world rather than despoil sacred shrines and the offerings of superstition.

Considerable reluctance was shown to allowing us to see the treasury. All manner of excuses were brought forward : all available priests were engaged in the various churches ; the key was mislaid ; an order had been made denying the privilege to strangers, etc., etc. It was only when they heard that one of us had come eight thousand miles from the East and the other five thousand miles from the West, that the prior's heart relented and he deputed a priest to guide us. Four heavy iron doors of a small low building in one corner of the yard were unbolted and unlocked, and then after passing through various long and dark passages we found ourselves in the first chamber of the treasury. It was a low room about 40 feet square, and lined on all sides with iron and glass

closets. These contained the precious vestments which have furnished the most excellent objects upon which enormous wealth could be accumulated, in a form naturally precious in the eyes of inhabitants of a monastery. They are long robes literally sown over with pearls of great size and exquisite beauty, every one of which for the purposes of a scarf pin, a necklace or earrings could be sold for a very high price, but there are so many of them that I could not help thinking that if by any chance whatever this treasury is ever sacked, the price of pearls in the whole world will seriously decline, for it seemed difficult to believe that there were more pearls outside of the Troitza Monastery than inside, in all the jewel boxes of all the fair women of the rest of the world. One robe with the Nicene Creed worked in pearls, was shown us and its value was stated to be one million rubles or five hundred thousand dollars. Another, which represented the crucifixion worked in pearls, diamonds, rubies, sapphires

and amethysts was valued at upwards of two million rubles or over a million dollars, and when it is stated that there are several hundred vestments, more or less studded with pearls, as these are, the value of them all can be imagined. I counted thirty-five bishop's staves all of pure gold and covered with precious stones. One book of the Gospels is bound in pure gold and studded with jewels, weighing one hundred and fifty-two pounds, and besides this there are altar covers, sarcophagus covers, mitres, and other ecclesiastical instruments of the most precious materials, too numerous to mention. An agate adorned with several splendid garnets, and in which the natural lines of the interior very distinctly show the picture of a monk kneeling before a cross, is considered the most valuable precious stone in the collection, and was shown to us with great solemnity by our guide. Of almost equal curiosity was a natural cross, in a sort of Jasper or horn stone, formed by two white veins crossing each other in the brown

material of the stone. The hair, shirt and wooden cup of St. Sergius are of course revered as the more precious relics than all the rich vestments of his successors and a great clerical gown embroidered by Catherine II, shows that lady to have been almost as proficient in needlework as in intrigue. As is usually the case, the impression left by the contemplation of such riches was one of weariness. The eye and the mind become sated and tired of calculating values. It is impossible to imagine any benefit which the Monastery, the church or the empire receives from the stagnation of what might be such an immense amount of useful capital. On the other hand it may be said with equal truth that the value is more useful in this form than in that of cannon and rifles which would probably be the object of its expenditure were it ever to be diverted from its present use. The priest who guided us did not doubt that the treasury would some day be used in the defence of the Russian people, and an attack by the Germans seemed to his

mind the most probable future event. From all appearances Troitza seemed to be as good a school of patriotism to-day as it ever has been in the past, and it is safe to say that should the empire ever be in danger again, the monastery of St. Sergius will be heard of to good purpose.

We next visited the refectory or dining hall of the monks. It is a very large room beautifully decorated, but the dinner which was just being distributed seemed to our Western notions quite as uninviting as could be wished for by the severest ascetic. It consisted of a dish of *borshlj*, the Russian soup, a horrible conglomeration of broth, vegetables, boiled beef, ham, sausages, cabbage and sour cream, and a piece of dark, hot and sour looking bread.

We were invited to visit the other cathedrals and chapels, but weary with standing and sight seeing, we preferred to rest and observe what is after all the most interesting feature of Troitza, the surging mass of pilgrims, wandering to and fro from one

building to the other, rejoicing that they had at length reached this sacred spot, some of them no doubt inwardly wondering why they ever came, and most of them looking as though they would be happiest if they were only safely home again. The library contains some beautiful illuminated manuscripts, among them one copy of the Gospels, written about 1215, and had I not been surfeited with a comparatively recent visit to the Vatican and other collections, it would no doubt have been even more interesting and attractive. Among recent books I was somewhat surprised to find quite complete collections of modern German, English and French rationalistic writers, as well as the more prominent works of destructive biblical criticism. I had not yet learned what subsequent conversation with numerous well educated Russians taught me, namely, that to the Russian mind there is nothing inconsistent in the position of almost complete unbelief and rigid adherence to all the superstitious forms of the received faith. Dean

Stanley tells us that the great German philosopher Schelling told a Russian prince who came to Berlin to hear his lectures, that a certain Russian priest knew more about his philosophy than he did himself, and that priest was afterwards found to be a monk at Troitza. In like manner the speculations of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Renan, Kuenen and others are by no means unknown in this central point of orthodoxy, and who shall say that this small leaven of liberal thought, albeit too radical at present, shall not some day in some degree leaven the whole lump of gross and almost barbarous superstition in the Russian church.

A monk with whom I spoke there, and who afterwards proved to be Professor of Modern Literature in the theological seminary, very politely gave me as full information as the time would warrant as to the organization of the church at present. The Holy Governing Synod at St. Petersburg, which is the real head of the Russian church now consists of twelve members, four

Archbishops, six Archimandrites and two Archpriests. This synod is presided over by the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, but is subject of course to the Emperor, to whom it renders a report of its affairs through a lay Procurator, and the latter is in fact the real head of the Russian church. My informant was positive in his belief that no other religion would ever take the place of the Orthodox, in the minds of the Russian people, and for proof he pointed to the complete interweaving of the church with the daily life of every Russian ; the morning and evening prayers which are said in every church whether there be a congregation present or not ; the solemn services held at the houses at the times of marriage, of child birth, of baptism and of death ; the special blessings which every Russian invokes before undertaking a new work of any magnitude,—all seemed to uphold this argument. As I have said above, the church is not persecuting in its spirit, though it jealously guards its own members from anything foreign which

might induce them to change their faith. With a view to this, the church takes almost complete charge of the censorship, and my own experience proved to me that its functions were strictly exercised. I received the Century Magazine from a friend, and the copy of the July number which was handed to me in Moscow, had not only the article on Count Tolstoi, but also all the advertisements carefully torn out. Tolstoi and his works are tabooed solely on account of his religious ideas and when I indignantly asked the Superintendent of Police why the advertisements were torn out, I ascertained that it was on account of the announcements which they contained of "Irreligious Books,"—that is books not countenanced by the church authorities. I could not at first believe this, but a suggestion from me to the authorities that a dread of the soap advertisements was probably the real cause of the mutilation, was so unpleasantly received, that I preferred to accept their own statement of the case,

and lay the annoyance at the door of intellectual intolerance.

A rising storm and the necessity of reaching Moscow in time for the evening train for St. Petersburg, prevented our seeing the solitary cells and Catacombs of Gethsemane nearby, and cut short our visit to Troitza. But brief as it was, it gave us a very excellent impression of what is beyond comparison the most interesting spot in all Russia. That it is so little known in this country is the fault of that superficial spirit of travel with which most American tourists in Russia seem to be possessed, and which leads them to take a hasty view of St. Petersburg and Moscow, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred to wholly neglect the most interesting of sights which are even a slight distance off the beaten track. Did space and time permit, it would be pleasant and perhaps not uninteresting to describe some of the Orthodox Churches of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and numerous customs of the people which even a hurried stranger

may observe, and which throw a most instructive light upon the Russian religion. But most of all this has been set forth fully and well by numerous travelers, and the effect of it all would be merely to emphasize once more the crowning importance in the religious life of the Oriental Church of the two localities named in the title of this essay.

Nor is this the occasion to indulge in philosophical discussion of the Oriental Church, its real importance or possible future. Of its effect upon the daily life of its own worshippers, no critic has spoken more severely than a former priest of the church in this city, Father Bjerring, who in his book "The Offices of the Oriental Church," says, "In formal, perfunctory religion no country so abounds as Russia. As to religion of inmost righteousness and Christly living, perhaps no Christian country affords worse examples. Surely a nation which is imperilled by the most determined and deadly enemies that ever conspired to compass its ruin, needs something besides a despised, subservient

priesthood and a formal religion. There are in Russia forty thousand churches with seventy thousand priests, but they are paralyzed by the Czar's rule. And the Russian people greatly need a strong moral influence. Of the ignorance of the peasantry one may judge by the fact that hardly ten per cent. of them can read or write. In view also of modern infidelity, that is spreading among the higher classes, it may be understood how unfortunate it is for Russia that the moral influence of the church is undermined."

Such being the facts, it is at least doubtful whether the energetic opponents of the present state of affairs are rightly described as "the most determined and deadly enemies that ever conspired to compass the ruin of the nation," and I think that one effect of a visit to Russia, and a view of its religion, will be to awaken in the traveler a more or less ardent sympathy with the aims and struggles of the noble and heroic band who are stigmatized as Nihilists, and upon whose success, in my humble opinion, the future welfare of

Russia depends. This is said without sympathy for criminal excesses, which are as useless as they are wicked. But it is only fair to remember, and an observing traveler in Russia cannot but notice the fact, that against the perfect organization of despotism in that unhappy country, no war of revolution and freedom can be successfully waged without the elements of secrecy and terror. This cannot be gainsaid without denying the "Divine right of rebellion," and thus closing the door against liberty, truth and genuine Christian development in Russia forever. In the suggestion of remedies for the present demoralized and untenable condition of Russia, the words of Goethe, "All which merely frees our spirit without giving us the command over ourselves is deleterious"—cannot be too carefully borne in mind. The Russian people are fit to-day neither for self-government nor for a divorce of the church from the state. But if they are ever to become fit for either of these consummations, a determined and

radical break with all tradition and history seems, at least to an outsider, the very first prerequisite in a country where healthy development is simply impossible, and it may be confidently asserted that in such a cataclysm the Oriental Orthodox Church will not only not suffer, but will have the opportunity of adding to all its patriotic laurels the great distinction of saving the moral life of the nation. Degraded and deteriorated as the church is to-day, its history nevertheless gives reason to hope that in such a supreme trial it will not be found wanting.

My observation of the Oriental Church came to an end when, not long after, I took a train on a lovely morning from St. Petersburg bound for Finland. I left a country whose leading characteristics, in spite of better aspirations, are still more or less barbarous, dissipation, filth and superstition. Within two hours I found myself in a country whose leading characteristics are the very opposite. Before nightfall I had arrived in the city of Helsingfors, perhaps the cleanest,

neatest, most sober and most orderly of cities of its size in the world. As I walked its broad, well built streets, saw the noble university, with its five hundred and fifty students, the magnificent library of one hundred thousand volumes, the beautiful Nicolai Church in the public square built in a severe classic style of architecture, and nobly elevated above the city by a grand plaza fifty feet above the surrounding public square,—on comparing this with what I had seen during the past months, the contrast seemed obvious. The people among whom I was were not distinguished in the annals of European history. They were modest as far as influence outside was concerned, but among themselves they seemed the ideal people of honesty, thrift and thorough self-education. It was with great pride in the religious faith of my fathers, and the religious faith too, of this society, that I remembered that I was in a country and among a people LUTHERAN to the core. Every one who values the Lutheran name

and is proud of the history of his church should be thankful that its foremost representative peoples of Europe are so situated, that the contrast with their neighbors is calculated to set off to the best possible advantage the superiority of the Lutheran faith in its effects upon its own believers. Perhaps nowhere in the world is this contrast more observable than in the difference between Russia and Finland.

"Sancta Sophia and Troitza" was my theme, and my object has been attained if these names convey to my hearers more intelligent and real impressions than was the case an hour ago. It is not without an effort that an American Protestant can think of the millions of members of the great church which has been so hastily sketched, as Fellow-Christians, but this very effort is one of the highest and greatest achievements of true Christianity. Travel is truly the most melancholy and useless of occupations if it has not such a liberalizing effect. Its true motto

must always be "Prove all things—hold fast to that which is good," and in the contemplation of the great systems of christian worship,—their glorious past, their present and their future hopes—he is indeed to be pitied who cannot at the end join in the beautiful lines of Elliot with which I may fitly close :

We hate not the religion of bare walls,
 We scorn not the Cathedral's pomp of prayer,
 For sweet are all our Father's festivals.
 If contrite hearts the Heavenly banquet share
 In field or temple – God is everywhere.









Author Holls, Frederick William.
Title Sancta Sophia and Troitza.
H.

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